

MAY I?
NO. 1809

**A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“If I may.”—Matthew 9:21.

THE woman in the narrative was fully persuaded that if she did but touch our Lord’s garment she would be made whole. What she had heard and seen concerning Jesus made her sure of His superabundant power to heal the sick. A touch would do it. Yes, even a touch of His clothes. Her one and only question was, might she touch Him? Could she touch Him? She would surely be healed if she could touch, but was this allowable? Was this possible? I know that multitudes of sin-sick men and women are vexed with this same question. Oh that I could help them over the difficulty! May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, aid me!

This poor diseased woman did not utter this “if” of hers with her lips. Perhaps if she had it might not have troubled her so much, for a silent doubt usually eats right into the heart. You have heard of the Spartan boy, who had hidden a fox in his bosom, and allowed it to eat into his vitals before he would admit it. Beware of having a doubt hidden away in your heart, gnawing and tearing. If you are even now suffering from “If I may, if I may,” reveal the trouble to some tender Christian friend and you may soon escape from it.

But the sufferer now before us had the courage to put the question to a practical issue, she tried whether she might or not. She had the good sense, the grace-given wisdom, not to wait until she had solved that question in her mind, but she went and solved it, as a matter of fact, whether she might or not; she went and actually touched the hem of the garment of the Savior, and she was made perfectly whole. Oh that those I am now addressing would have the bravery and the earnestness to do the same! Oh that they would put the disturbing question to a practical test at once! There can be but one result, for as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole. Now, I know that souls are going to be saved to-night. Who they are I cannot tell, but some are certain to come to the Savior, and this night to be made perfectly whole. I know it because we prayed an hour ago for it downstairs, many of us, and we felt the assurance that we were heard. My dear son, in praying just now, I am sure, felt a very remarkable liberty at the mercy seat, and the witness of the Spirit within, that he was heard. The Lord has heard the petitions which we have presented in the name of Jesus. You are going to be saved. I would to God that every unconverted person here would lean forward and say, “May it be *I*. God grant that salvation may come to *me*.” I am going, therefore, in the simplest way possible, without any attempt at a sermon, to try to talk so as to meet this rankling question which lies within, festering and irritating many an earnest heart—this doubtful inquiry, “If I may.”

You know, many of you, who Jesus is, and you believe Him to be the Son of God, the Savior of men. You are sure that “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” You have no doubt about those eternal verities which surround His Godhead, His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection and His Second Advent. The doubt is concerning you personally—“If I may be a partaker of this salvation.” You feel quite certain that faith in Jesus Christ will save anyone—will save you if you exercise it. You have no doubt about the doctrine of justification by faith. You have learned it, and you have received it as a matter beyond dispute that he that believes in Him has everlasting life, and you know that he who comes to Him, He will in nowise cast out. You know the remedy, and believe in its efficacy, but then the doubt comes—may I be healed by it? At the back of your belief in faith, hides the gloomy thought “May I believe? May I trust? I see the door is open; many are entering. May I? I see that there is washing from the worst of sins in the sacred fountain. Many are being cleansed. May I wash and be clean?” Without formulating a doubt so as to express it, it comes up in all sorts of ways, and robs you

of all comfort, and indeed, of all hope. When a sermon is preached it is like as when one sets a table out with all manner of dainties, and you look at it, but do not feel that you have any right to sit down and partake. This is a wretched delusion. Its result will be deadly unless you are delivered from it. Like a harpy, it preys upon you, croaking forever. When you see the brooks flowing with their sparkling streams, and you are thirsty, does the thought arise in your heart that you are not permitted to drink? If so, you are out of your mind, you talk and think like one bereft of reason. Yet many are in this state spiritually. This doubting your liberty to come to Jesus is a very wretched business, it mars and spoils your reading and your hearing and your attempts to pray, and you will never get any comfort until this question has been answered in your heart once and for all—"May I?"

Our Authorized Version may not be exactly correct in this passage, but I do not care whether it is or not, so far as my address is concerned, for it does not depend upon the accuracy of a text. I am quite satisfied to preach from it tonight, but there is another translation in the Revised Version, which I dare say is more accurate. I will preach from that when I have done with the first. This shall be our subject—"If I may"; or first, "*if I may be allowed*," secondly, "*if I may be enabled*," thirdly, "*if I actually do*." This last is the Revised Version, "*If I do* but touch the hem of His garment I shall be made whole."

I. First, take it as we have got it here, "IF I MAY BE ALLOWED, or permitted, to touch the hem of His garment, I shall be made whole." That is your difficulty, is it?—Whether you have liberty and warrant to come and trust Christ—whether you, such a sinner as you are, are permitted to repose your soul upon His great atonement and His finished work. Let me reason with you a little.

In the first place, you are quite sure of this—that *there is nothing to forbid your coming and resting your guilty soul upon Christ*. I shall defy you, if you will read all the Old and New Testament through, to put your finger upon a single verse in which God has said that you may not come and put your trust in Christ. Perhaps you will reply that you do not expect to read it in the Bible, but God may have said it somewhere where it is not recorded. Well, I answer you there, for He says, "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek you Me In vain." Now, He has bidden you over and over again to seek His face, but He has never said that you shall seek His face in vain. Dismiss that thought. Again I return to what I have said, there is nothing in the Scripture that refuses you permission to come and repose your soul once for all upon Christ. It is written, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Does that exclude you? It is written, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Does that shut you out? No, it includes you, it invites you; it encourages you. And I come again to what I have said—that nowhere in the word of God is it written that you will be cast out if you come, or that Jesus Christ will not remove your burden of sin if you come and lay it at His feet.

Ah, no, a thousand passages of Scripture welcome you, but not one stands with a drawn sword to keep you back from the tree of life. Our heavenly Father sets His angels at the gates of His house to welcome all comers, but there are no dogs to bark at poor beggars, or so much as a notice that trespassers must beware. Come and welcome. There is none to say you may not.

Further, do you not think that *the very nature of the Lord Jesus Christ should forbid your raising a doubt about your being permitted to come and touch His garment's hem*? Surely, if anyone were to paint the Lord Jesus Christ as an ascetic, repelling, with lofty pride the humbler folk who had never reached His dignity of consecration—if any were to paint Him as a Pharisee driving off publicans and sinners, or as an iceberg of righteousness chilling the sinful, it would be a foul slander upon His divine character. If anyone were to say that Jesus Christ is exacting—that He will not receive to Himself the guilty just as they are, but requires a great deal of them, and will only welcome to Himself those who are, like Himself, good, and true, and excellent, that would not be truth but the direct opposite of it, for "this man receives sinners, and eats with them," was thrown in His face when He lived here below, and what the prophet said of Him was most certainly true, if anything was ever true. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." Little children are wonderful judges of character; they know intuitively who is kind. And so are loving women. They do not go through the processes of reasoning, but they come to a conclusion very soon as to a man's personal character. Now, the children came and clambered our Redeemer's knee, and the mothers brought their infants for His blessing. How can you dream that He will repel *you*? The women wept and bewailed Him, whoever might refuse Him they pitied him, and therefore I am sure that He is not hard to move. Therefore I want you to feel sure of

this—that there is nothing in the Savior’s character which can for a moment lead Him to discard you and drive you from His presence. Those who know Him best will say that it is impossible for Him to ever refuse the poor and needy. Not a blind man could cry to Him without receiving sight, or a hungry man look to Him without being fed. He was touched with a feeling of our infirmities—the most gentle, and loving, and tender of all that ever dwelt upon this earth. I pray you, then, take it for granted that you may come boldly to Him without fear of a rebuff. If He has power to heal you when you touch Him, rest assured that you may touch Him. You may believe; there is no question; for Jesus, is too loving to refuse you. It will give the Lord Jesus joy to receive you. It is not possible that He should say no to you, it is not in His nature to spurn you from His presence.

Will you think, yet again, of *the fullness of Christ’s power to save*, and make a little argument of it? Christ was so full of power to bless that the secret virtue even saturated His clothes. It overflowed His blessed person, it ran down to the skirts of His garments, yes, and it went to that blue hem which every Jew wore round about his dress—that fringe of blue. It went into that border so that if the woman did but touch the raveling of His garment, virtue would stream into her. If the touch was a touch of faith it mattered not where the contact was made. Well now, you often judge of a man’s willingness to help by the power that he has. When a person has little to give he is bound to be economical in his giving. He must look at every penny before he gives it, if he has so few pence to spare. But when a nobleman has no limit to his estate you feel sure that he will freely give if his heart is generous and tender. The blessed Lord is so full of healing power that He does not need to stint Himself as to the miracles of healing He shall work, and He must be, according to the goodness of His nature, delighted to overflow, glad to communicate to those who come. You know if a city is straitened for water the corporation will send out an order that only so much may be used, and then there is a stinting of public baths, and factories, because there is a scarcity of the precious fluid. But if you go along the Thames when we have had a rainy season, you laugh at the notion of a short supply and economical rules. If a dog wants to drink from a river, nobody ever questions his right to do so. He comes down to the water and he laps, and what is more, he runs right into it, regardless of those who may have to drink after him. Look at the cattle, how they stand knee-deep in the stream and drink, and drink again, and nobody ever says, as he goes up the Thames, that those poor London people will run short of water, for the dogs and the cattle are drinking it up before it gets down to London. No, it never enters our head to petition the Conservators to restrain the dogs and the cows, for there is so much water that there must be full liberty to everyone to drink to the full. Your question is, “May I? May I?” I answer that question by this; there is nothing to forbid you, there is everything in the nature of Christ to encourage you, and there is such a fullness of mercy in Him that you cannot think that He can have the slightest motive for withholding His infinite grace.

Moreover, suppose you come to Christ as this woman came, and touch the hem of His garment, *you will not injure Him*. You ought to hesitate in getting good for yourself if you would injure the person through whom you obtain that good. But you will not injure the Lord Jesus Christ. He perceived that virtue had gone out of Him, but He did not perceive it by any pain He felt, for rather do I believe that He perceived it by the pleasure which it caused Him. Something gave Him unusual joy. A faith-touch had reached Him through His clothes, and He rejoiced to respond by imparting healing virtue from Himself. You will not defile my Lord, O sinner, if you bring Him all your sin. He will not have to die again to put away your fresh burden of transgression. He will not have to shed one drop of blood to make atonement for your multiplied sin, the one sacrifice on Calvary anticipated all possible guiltiness. If you will come just as you are, He will not have to leave heaven again, and be born again on earth, and live another sorrowful life in order to save you. He will not need to wear another crown of thorns, or bear another wound in His hands, or feet, or side. He has done all His atoning work, do you not remember His victorious cry—“It is finished”? You cannot injure Him though all your injurious thoughts, and words, and speeches are laid upon Him. You will not be robbing Him of anything though your faith-touch should convey a life into yourself. He has such a fullness about Him that if all you poor sinners will come at once, when you have taken away all of merit that you need, there will be as much merit left as there was before. When you deal with the infinite you may divide and subtract, but you cannot diminish. If the whole race were washed in the infinite fountain of Jesus’ merit, the infinite would still remain.

Let me tell you that if you come to Jesus and just trust Him tonight—only trust Him—*you shall rather benefit Him than injure Him*, for it is His heart’s joy to forgive sinners. He longs and thirsts to heal

wounded consciences. My Lord is hungering, even now that He is in heaven, to bring poor sinners to His Father's feet, and reconcile them unto Him, so that you will bless Him; you will increase His joy, if you will return to the great Father whose house you have left. You will delight His heart as again He finds the lost piece of money, bears back the lost sheep, and welcomes home the returning prodigal. I think you need not keep on asking, "If I may," for these cheering reasons ought to convince you that you are fully warranted to trust in Him whom God has set forth to be a prince and a Savior, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins.

Might not this also help you? *Others just like you have ventured to Him, and there has not been a case in which they have been refused.* I thought, like you, when I was a child, that the gospel was a very wonderful thing, and free to everybody but myself. I should not have wondered at all if my brother and sisters as well as my father and mother had been saved, but, somehow, I could not get a hold of it myself. It was a precious thing, quite as much out of my reach as the Queen's diamonds. So I thought. To many the gospel is like a tram-car in motion, and they cannot jump upon it. I thought surely everybody would be saved, but I would not, and yet, soon after I began to cry for mercy I found it. My expectations of difficulty were all sweetly disappointed. I believed and found immediate rest unto my soul. When I once understood that there was life in a look at the crucified One, I gave that look, and I found eternal life. Up to now I have never met with anybody who gave that look and was repulsed, but they all say—

*"I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad."*

Nobody ever bears a contrary witness. I challenge the universe to produce a man who was chased from Christ's door, or forbidden to find in Him a Savior. I pray you therefore observe that since others have come this way to life and peace, God has appointed it to be the common thoroughfare of grace. Poor guilty sinners, there is a sign set up, "This way for sinners: This way for the guilty: This way for the hungry: This way for the thirsty: This way for the lost. Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Why, surely, you need not say, "If I may."

And why do you think—and that is one more question I would put to you—*why do you think that the Lord Jesus Christ in His mercy has led you here tonight?* "Oh, I always come," says one. Then what has induced you always to come where Christ is talked about so much, and where He saves so many? Surely the Lord means to accept you if you will believe on Jesus! "But I do not usually come here," says one, "I only stepped in here tonight; I am afraid, out of curiosity." Yes, curiosity moved you, but may it not be that compassion moved God to guide you here? I like to hear a wife say, "My husband is not a member of the church, sir, but he comes to hear the gospel, and therefore I have hope for him." Yes, yes, if we get them into the battle a shot will come their way one of these days. I love to see yon hungry sparrows round about the window; they will get courage enough to pick up a crumb of mercy one of these days. I hope so. And why should it not be *now*? If the trouble is "If I may," I will ask you whether it does not help to remove that trouble to reflect that you are still on praying ground and pleading terms with God. You might long before this have been cast into despair. Should not the Lord's long-suffering lead you to repentance, and induce you to come to Christ?

Now listen, friend, there is no room to say, "If I may," for, first of all, *you are invited* to come and accept Christ as your Savior—invited over and over again in the Word of God. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters, and he that has no money, come you, buy, and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Jesus Christ invites all those that labor and are heavy laden to come unto Him, and He will give them rest. God is honest in His invitations. You can be sure of that. If God invites you, He desires you to come and accept the invitation. After reading the many invitations of the Word of God to such as you are, you may not say, "If I may." It would be a wicked questioning of the sincerity of God.

In addition to being invited, *you are entreated.* Many passages of Scripture go far beyond a mere invitation. God persuades and entreats you to come to Him. He seems to cry as one that weeps, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn you, turn you; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" Our Lord and Master when He made the feast, and they that were bidden did not come, sent out His servants to compel them to

come in. He used more than a bare invitation; He put forth a divine compulsion. I would entreat, persuade, and exhort all of you who have not believed in Jesus to do so now. In the name of Jesus, I beseech you seek the Lord. I do not merely put it to you, “Will you or will you not?” but I would lay my whole heart by the side of the request and say to you, “Come to Jesus. Come and rest your guilty souls on Him.” Do you not understand the gospel message? Do you know what it asks and what it gives? You shall receive perfect pardon in a moment if you believe in Jesus. You shall receive a life that will never die—receive it now, quick as a lightning flash, if you do but trust in the Son of God. Whoever you may be and whatever you may have done, if you will with your heart believe in Him whom God has raised from the dead, and obey Him henceforth as your Lord and Savior, all manner of sin and of iniquity shall be forgiven you. God will blot out your iniquities like a cloud. He will make you begin *de novo*—afresh, anew. He will make you a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things shall pass away and all things become new.

But there is the point—believing in Jesus, and you look me in the face and cry, “But may I?” May you? Why, you are exhorted, invited, entreated to do so. Nor is this all, *you are even commanded to do it*. This is the commandment—that you believe on Jesus, whom He has sent. This is the gospel, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.” There is a command, with a threat for disobedience. Shall anybody ask, “May I,” after that? If I read, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,” do I ask, “May I love God?” If I read, “Honor your father and your mother,” do I ask, “May I honor my father and my mother?” No. A command is a permit and something more. It gives full allowance and much more. As you will be damned if you believe not, you have herein, given to you a right to believe—not only permission, but a warrant of the most practical kind. Oh, can you not see it? Will you not cry unto God, “Lord, if You will damn me if I do not believe, You have in this given me a full gospel liberty to believe. Therefore I come and put my trust in Jesus.”

“If I may”—why, I think that this questioning ought to come to an end now. Will you not give it up? May the Holy Spirit show you, poor sinner, that you may now lay your burden down at Jesus’ feet, and be at once saved. You may believe. You have full permission now to confess your sin and to receive immediate pardon, see if it is not so. Cast your guilty soul on Him, and rise forgiven and renewed, henceforth to live in fervent gratitude, a miracle of love.

That is the first meaning of the text, “If I may be permitted to touch the hem of His garment, I shall be made whole.”

II. But then there arises in other hearts this equally bitter question, “BUT CAN I? I know that I may if I can, but I cannot.” This woman, seeing the crowd, might have said, “If I can touch the hem of His garment, I shall be made whole, but can I get to Him? Can a feeble person like me force my way through the throng and touch Him?”

Now, that is the question I am going to answer. The will to believe in Christ is as much a work of grace as faith itself, and where the will is given and a strong desire, a measure of grace is already received, and with it the power to believe. Do you not know that the will to commit adultery is, according to Scripture, reckoned as adultery? “He has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Now, if the very thought of uncleanness and the will towards it is the thing itself, then a desire or will to believe contains within itself the major part of faith. I say not that it is all, but I do say this—that if the power of God has made a man will to believe, the greatest work has been done, and his actually believing will follow in due course. That entire willingness to believe is nine-tenths of believing. Inasmuch as to will is present with you, the power which you find not as yet, will certainly come to you. The man is dead, and the hardest thing is to make him live, but in the case before us the quickening is accomplished, for the man lives so far as to will, he wills to believe, he yearns to believe, he longs to believe, how much has been done for him! Rising from the dead is a greater thing than the performance of an act of life. Already I see some breaths of life in you who are longing and yearning to lay hold on Christ. You shall, yet lay hold on Him, and live in His presence. I would have said to that woman, had I been there and known then what I know now, “Oh, woman, that faith of yours, that if you can but touch the hem of His garment you will be made whole, is a greater thing than the actual touch can be. It is not at present so operative, but it is a more singular product of grace. You already have within you the greater work of grace, and the lesser will follow. A thousand persons could press through the crowd and touch the hem of the Savior’s robe, but you are the only person in whom God has worked the faith that a touch will

make you whole. I might say of such a faith as that, 'Flesh and blood has not revealed it to you' and if you are in that condition, there is a very great work done in you already, and you need not doubt the possibility of your touching the sacred garment."

But mark this; faith in Christ is the simplest action that anybody ever performs. It is the action of a child, indeed, it the action of a new-born babe in grace. A new-born babe never performs an action that is very complicated. We say, "Oh, it is such a babyish thing," meaning thereby that it is so small. Now, faith comes at the moment that the child is born into God's family; it is simultaneous with the new birth. One of the first signs and tokens of being born again is faith; therefore it must be a very, very simple thing. I venture to put it very plainly when I say that faith in Christ differs in no respect from faith in anybody else, except as to the person upon whom that faith is set. You believe in your mother, you may, in the same manner, believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. You believe in your friend, it is the same act that you have to do toward your higher and better friend. You believe the news that is commonly reported and printed in the daily journals; it is the same act which believes the Scripture, and the promise of God.

The reason why faith in the Lord Jesus is a superior act to faith in anyone else lies in this fact—that it is a superior person whom you believe in, and superior news that you believe, and your natural heart is more adverse to believing in Jesus than to believing in anyone else. The Holy Spirit must teach your faith to grasp the high things of Christ Jesus, but that grasp is by the hand of a simple child-like faith. But it is the same faith, mark that. It is the gift of God in so far as this—that God gives you the understanding and the judgment to exercise it upon His Son, and to receive Him. The faith of a child in his father is almost always a wonderful faith; just the faith that we would ask for our Lord Jesus. Many children believe that there is no other man in the world so great and good, and right and kind and rich, and everything else as their father is, and if anybody were to say that their father was not as wonderful a man as Mr. Gladstone, or some other great statesman, they would become quite grieved, for if their father is not king, it is a mistake that he is not. Children think so of their parents, and that is the kind of faith we would have you exercise towards the Lord Jesus Christ, who deserves such confidence and much more. We should give to Jesus a faith by which we do Him honor and magnify Him exceedingly. As the child never thinks where the bread and butter is to come from tomorrow morning, and it never enters its little head to fret about where it will get new socks when the present ones are worn out, so must you trust in Jesus Christ for everything you want between here and heaven—trust Him without asking questions. He can and will provide. Just give yourself up to Him entirely, as a child gives itself up to a parent's care, and feels itself to be at ease. Oh, what a simple act it is!—this act of faith. I am sure that it must be a very simple act, and cannot require wisdom, and so forth, because I notice that it is the wise people that cannot do it, it is the strong people that cannot do it, and it is the people who are righteous in themselves that cannot reach it. Faith is a kind of act which is performed by those who are childlike in heart, which the world calls fools, and ridicule and persecutes for their folly. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the weak things of the world and base things, and things which are despised hath God chosen." There are persons with no education whatever, who just know their Bible is true, and have an abundant faith. They are poor in this world, but rich in faith. Happy people! Alas for those wise people whose wisdom prevents faith in Jesus! They have been to more than one university, and have earned all the degrees that carnal wisdom can bestow upon them, and yet they cannot believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Oh, friend, do not think that faith is some difficult and puzzling thing, for then these senior wranglers and doctors of divinity would have it. It is the simplest act that the mind can perform. Just as I lean now with all my weight on this rail, and if it breaks I fall, so lean your full weight on Jesus Christ and that is faith. Just as a babe lies in its mother's bosom, unconscious of the thunderstorm, or of the rocking of the ship, quite safe and happy because it rests in the bosom of love, all fear and care laid aside because of that true heart which beats beneath, even so just cast yourself altogether upon Christ and that is all that you have to do—just, in fact, leave off doing—

*"Cast your deadly doing down,
Down at Jesus' feet.
Stand in Him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete."*

“But shall I not have to do many good works?” asks one. You shall do as much as ever you like when you are once saved; but in this matter of your salvation you must fling all self-righteousness away as so much “devilry” that will ruin and injure you, and come simply to Christ, and Christ alone, and trust in Him.

“Oh,” says one, “I think I see a little light. If I am enabled—if I do but get power enough to trust in Jesus, I shall be made whole.” I will ask you another question. Do you not know that *you are bound to believe in Christ*—that it is due to Christ that He is believed in? I would not make extensive claims upon your faith for myself. Often have I said to friends who have told me that they could not believe in Christ, “Could you believe in *me*? If I were to tell you that I would do such and such things, would you believe it?” “Oh yes, sir.” “If anyone were to say that he did not believe what I said, how would you feel?” “I should feel very indignant, for I feel that I can trust you, indeed I cannot help trusting you.” When I receive such confidence from one of my fellow creatures, I feel that it is cruelly wrong for the same person to say, “I cannot trust Christ.” Oh, beloved, not believe Jesus! When did He lie? “Oh, but I cannot trust Him.” Not trust Him? What madness is this! And did He die in very truth? Did He seal His life’s witness with His heart’s blood, and can you not believe Him? My own conviction is that a great many of you can, and that already, to a large extent, you do; only you are looking for signs and wonders which will never come. Why not exert that power a little farther? The Spirit of God has given to you a measure of faith; oh, believe more fully, more unreservedly. Why, I know that you shivered just now at the very thought of doubting Christ. You felt how unjust and wrong it was, there is latent in you already a faith in Him. “He that believes not God has made Him a liar.” Would you make Christ a liar? Dear hearts, I know that you would not. Although you say that you dare not trust Him, yet you know that He is no liar, and you know that He is able to save you. What a strange state your mind has reached. How bewildered and befogged you are, for already I think, as a looker-on, I can see that there is within your soul a real faith in Jesus Christ, and yet what doubts distract you. Why not bring faith to the front and say, “I do believe, I will believe, that the Christ who is the Son of the Highest, and who died for the guilt of men, is able to save those that trust Him, and therefore I trust Him to save me. Sink or swim I trust Him. Lost or saved I will trust Him. Just as I am, with no other plea but that I am sure that He is able and willing to save, I cast my guilty soul on Him.” You have the power to trust Jesus when you have already yielded to the conviction that He is worthy to be trusted. You have but to push to its practical conclusion what God the Holy Spirit has already worked in many of you, and you will at once find peace.

Still, if you think that there is something that prevents your having faith in Christ, though you know that if you had it you would be saved, I do earnestly entreat you not to remain content for a single hour without a full, complete, and saving faith in Christ, for if you die unbelievers you are lost, and lost forever. Your only safety lies in believing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart, and obeying His commandments. Therefore use what common sense would suggest to you as the means for obtaining faith. If I were told in the vestry after service something by a true friend whose word I could not doubt, and yet if what he said seemed incredible, I would express to him a wish to believe it. I would not wish to imply for a moment that *he* was not truthful, but somehow I find it difficult to believe the remarkable statement that he made. What should I do in this case? If it were pressing that I should believe his statement, I would ask him, “How did you come by the information? Where did you hear or read it? What are the precise facts?” Perhaps the moment that he mentioned where he got it from I would conclude at once that the wonderful statement was unquestionably correct. Or if he said, “Well, I give it to you on my own authority, but if you want any further information, you can get it by reading such and such a document, here is the document.”—Why, I would read it directly. I would read it with a good deal of happy prejudice in favor of my faithful friend. Anyhow, I would read it to see whether I could fully believe what he said, because I would be sure that he would not intentionally deceive me. Now, if there is anything in the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, or anything about Him that you question, let me invite you to read over the four gospels again, especially the story of His crucifixion. That cross of His is a very wonderful thing, for not only does it save those who have faith in it, but it breeds faith in those who look at it—

*“When I see Him wounded, bleeding,
Dying on the accursed tree,
Then I feel my heart believing
That He suffered thus for me.”*

There is life in a look at Christ, because in the very considering of Christ there is the breeding of a living faith. We listen to the word, and faith comes by hearing. We read the word, and picture the whole thing before our eyes, and we say, “Yes, I do believe it. I never saw it quite in this fashion before, but I now believe it, and I will risk my soul on it.”

Now, dear hearts, if any of you who have never trusted Christ will trust Him tonight, if you perish I will perish with you! For, though I have known my Lord these thirty-five years, I have no other hope of salvation than I had when I first came to Him. I had no merits of my own then, and I have none now. I have preached many sermons, offered many prayers, given much alms, brought many souls to Christ; but I place all that I have ever done under my feet, and desire, as far as it is good, to give to God the glory of it, but as far as it comes of myself, I would sink it in the sea. I am saved in Christ, by faith in Him; but confidence in myself is detestable to me. I dare believe in Jesus Christ as my all in all, but I am less than nothing before Him.

Come, we start fair, you see. If we start tonight, you and I will start on a level, with the same confidence in the same Savior, the same blood to cleanse us, and the same power to save us, and we will meet in heaven. As surely as we meet at the cross, we will meet where the Savior wears the crown. Oh, that you would trust Him now, and believe Him. “I have no good works,” says one. Then for certain you cannot trust in them. You will be forced to trust in Jesus only. “Oh, but I have no good feelings.” I am glad to hear you say so. Then you are not tempted to trust in feelings, but will be drawn to trust wholly on your Lord. “Oh, but I feel so unfit.” Very well, then you cannot trust in your fitness, but must trust in Him alone. It is a blessing when spiritual poverty forces a man into the way of life.

III. Here I close with these words. This woman said in her heart, “IF I DO TOUCH the hem of His garment, I shall”—what? “I shall be made whole.” It is not “If I may but touch I *may be* made whole.” No, she had got over the maybe’s, in the first struggle. It is, “If I may I shall.” If you trust Christ you shall be made whole. If you do tonight actually repose yourself in Christ, as the Lord lives, you must live and be saved. Unless this Bible is all a lie, unless Jesus was a rank impostor, unless the eternal God can change, you that come and trust yourself with Jesus must and shall be saved in the last great day of account—

“Bold shall I stand in that great day,”

for I shall tell the Lord of His own promise, and how He bade me trust Him, and if I am not saved then His word is broken, and that can never be. He *is* true. Oh, it is this that some of you need to have done with—thinking, and talking, and considering, and hoping. You need now to come, and trust, resting yourself fully and wholly on what Christ has done. He loved, and lived, and died that sinners might not die. He worked a complete work, of which He said as He expired, “It is finished.” There is nothing for you to add to it, nothing for you to bring with you to make that work complete, but you yourself, stripped naked of every hope, black, foul, guilty, abominable, the worst of the worst, have only to come and look up to those five wounds, and to that bleeding, thorn-crowned head, and to say, “Into Your hands I commit my spirit,” and you shall be saved. It is done. “Your sins which are many are forgiven you. Go, and sin no more.” You are His child. Go and live to the glory of your Father, and may the peace of God that passes all understanding be with you forever and ever. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 9:14-38.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—548, 614, 612.**

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